

—1993—
Downtown
Edmonton
Walking Tour



DOWNTOWN EDMONTON WALKING TOUR - 1993

1. **The Edmonton Convention Centre** opened in 1983. The Convention Centre was located and designed to take advantage of the panoramic view of the magnificent North Saskatchewan River valley. The North Saskatchewan River has been a prominent feature in Edmonton's development, bringing European traders to the region over two hundred years ago. Today the valley is a major park system with numerous jogging, riding and cross country and downhill ski trails. On the river you may see the Edmonton Queen, a paddle-wheel boat of the type that moved passengers and freight on the North Saskatchewan River as early as 1875.

Designed as a multiple purpose facility, the Convention Centre offers 150,000 square feet of space including 82,000 square feet of column free exhibit space, 20 flexible meeting rooms ranging from 395 to 3,720 square feet of commercial and office space. The Centre, managed by Economic Development Edmonton, has hosted as many as 5,000 convention delegates at one time. Operation of the Convention Centre is subsidized by the City of Edmonton. A visitor information centre is located in the building.

2. **The Historic Jasper Avenue East Block** was Edmonton's original downtown commercial core and is now the proposed site of the Edmonton Downtown Development Corporation's Old Town Market. The first phase of the project, the restoration of the Goodridge Block (1912) at the corner of 97 Street and Jasper Avenue, was completed in 1993. The Hub Hotel, originally the Jasper House Hotel, located in the Jasper East Block, has been in continuous operation since 1882. It was the first brick building between Winnipeg and Vancouver and the only brick building in Edmonton until 1892.

3. **Jasper Avenue** has been Edmonton's main street since 1875. The street and sidewalk improvements are recent products of the PProgram to Improve Downtown Edmonton (PRIDE). Jasper Avenue physical improvements are complete between 97 Street and 106 Street. Further work, to 109 Street, is planned.

4. **The Park Site** on the north side of Jasper Avenue, between Canada Place and the Nova building, is designated for a convention hotel. While the City awaits a suitable proposal, the site is maintained as a park by the City.

5. **Canada Place (1986)** is the headquarters of the Government of Canada's regional offices. A major feature of the building is the 16 storey atrium which runs the length of the building and is open to all upper floors.

6. **The Chinatown Gate** is a feature of Edmonton's Chinatown community. The Gate with its traditional Chinese art and architecture was designed and built by Edmonton's sister city, Harbin China. It was assembled on its current site by craftsmen from Harbin. South of the gate is the Downtown Farmer's Market.

7. **The Civic Block (1913)** was built to house Edmonton's City Council and civic administration. In 1957, it was replaced by a new City Hall but remained in use for many years as the Downtown Police Station. The building is currently vacant but a new concert hall is planned for this site. Behind the coloured glass panels, the original facade is of red brick.

8. **The Citadel Theatre**, is Edmonton's major performing arts centre/ theatre complex with a seating capacity of 1,996 in its 5 theatres. The theatres were built in two stages in 1979 and 1984. The Theatre's Lee Pavilion at the north end of the complex with its interior winter garden and waterfall is a popular downtown retreat. The Tucker Amphitheatre is on the upper level of the Lee Pavilion. The theatre complex retained the name of its predecessor which opened in 1965 in the Salvation Army Citadel building.

9. **The Centennial Library (1967)** was built to honour the occasion of Canada's 100th birthday as a nation. It is the main City Library and the library system headquarters. The Edmonton Public Library System has the highest circulation per capita of all public library systems in Canada.

10. **Sir Winston Churchill Square**, the focal point of the Civic Square, is the main venue for many festivals and outdoor events which have earned Edmonton the reputation of being Canada's "Festival City". From May to September the square is alive with entertainment, food fairs, and visual displays. At the northeast corner of the square is the very popular sculpture "Lunch Break".

11. **Edmonton Art Gallery (1968)** houses one of the largest collections of Canadian historical and contemporary art in the nation, including the permanent exhibit, "From Sea to Sea - The Development of Canadian Art ". The Gallery hosts 30 to 40 different exhibits per year making it one of the most popular downtown attractions for both residents and visitors. Just inside the front door is a wonderful gift shop offering interesting and unique gifts. There is a small fee for admission to the Gallery, except on Thursdays from 4:00 pm to 8:00 pm when admission is free.

12. **City Hall**, which officially opened October 1992, is designed as a civic centre and legislative building, rather than an administrative centre. The focal point of the building is the City Room which is used for public gatherings and displays. In keeping with Edmonton's environmental policies, the green marble capping the building's west wing, the burgundy granite pillars at the south entrance and the travertine used for the floor are all from the former City Hall building.

City Hall is also a showcase for the visual arts. Numerous works by Alberta artists are displayed throughout the building. This artwork was funded through Edmonton's One Percent for Art Policy, which allocates 1% of the construction budget of a municipal building for the purchase of art, and through grants provided by the Alberta Foundation for the Arts.

The clock and bell tower located in front of City Hall is a tribute to Edmonton's founders and volunteers. Named the Friendship Tower, the 200 foot structure features a computer controlled carillon with 23 bronze bells. The tower was paid for entirely by donations from the citizens and companies of Edmonton.



13. **Edmonton's Pedway Network** can be entered from the City Hall. You can walk from City Hall to the Convention Centre, to the LRT and most of the Downtown's shops, offices, and entertainment venues by way of over 9 kilometres of overhead and underground pedways. The pedway incorporates internal shopping malls and parking garages into the system.

14. **The Centennial Plaza** was built by the City with partial financial support from Molson's Brewery. Among the statues on the plaza is one commemorating the early commerce of the Edmonton area. The clock in the clock tower in front of the Westin Hotel is from the old Main Post Office building that once occupied the site.

15. **The McLeod Block (1915)** was Edmonton's first skyscraper and it remained the City's tallest building for almost 40years. Its twin was built in Spokane, Washington by the same architect. The ornate Canada Permanent Building (1911) is on the south side of the MacLeod Block.

16. **Rice Howard Way** was a popular shopping district as early as 1910. In 1983, this area became the first of Edmonton's major street improvement projects. The promenade connects the CanadaPlace and CityCentre sites. The restaurants and pubs are worth a visit.

17. **The Kelly Block (1915) and the Ramsey Building (1927)** were the cornerstones of historic Rice Howard Way Shopping District. By 1927, the Ramsey Department Store occupied both buildings. Today these buildings house some of Edmonton's most popular restaurants. The outdoor cafes are lively places throughout the summer.

18. **Edmonton Centre/Eaton Centre** is the retailing spine of Downtown Edmonton. Edmonton Centre was built in 1973 to accommodate a growing consumer preference for climate controlled shopping. It was city's first major retail office tower complex. Eaton Centre was built in 1987 replacing an Eaton's store on the same site. There are pedway connections to the Hilton Hotel and other retail and office buildings creating a network of indoor pedestrian shopping streets that allow people to walk around much of the Downtown core in comfort on the coldest days of winter. The Centre Suite Hotel is in Eaton Centre.

19. **Bentall Parking Lot (1992)** won a Downtown Business Association Urban Design Award. As a condition of the demolition permit for the obsolete commercial building that occupied this site property owners agreed to retain portions of the building and incorporate them into the parking lot design. The foliage in the planters will gradually cover the structure, leaving an 'urban ruin' depicting transition of urban land forms.

20. **Hollow Point (1987)** and its two benches provide a tiny oasis at this busy corner.

21. **The Boardwalk Market** was created by joining the Revillon Building (1913) and the Ross Brothers Hardware Building (1910) with a central atrium over the closed laneway. To encourage the project the City of Edmonton agreed to move the Parks and Recreation and Planning and Development Departments to the renovated complex.

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22. **The Warehouse District** including the Armstrong Block (1912), the Great West Saddlery Building (1911), the McKenney Building (1912), and the Metals Building (1914), developed during Edmonton's pre World War I economic boom. The Armstrong Block was built as a residential and commercial building. The other heritage buildings on this block were built as warehouses but are now used as offices and shops. The Miller building located between 103 Avenue and 104 Avenue is the first warehouse in Edmonton to be converted to loft style apartment housing. A number of interesting restaurants are located in the buildings between Jasper and 103 Avenues.

23. **The Row of Storefronts east of 104 Street on Jasper Avenue** provides a sample of the way Jasper Avenue looked prior to the development of more modern office complexes. The Birks Building (1929) is an especially fine example of a commercial building from an earlier era.

24. **The Castle of Perseverance (1984)** located in front of Metropolitan Place is one of a number of examples of privately funded art located in public places in Edmonton's Downtown.

25. **The Hudson's Bay Company Store (1939)** replaced an older (1905) structure on the same site. The store was renovated in 1990/91 and reopened as the Hudson's Bay Centre. Restoration was partially funded under the City's award winning Heritage Preservation Program. The first Hudson Bay Company trading post was established in Edmonton in 1795.

26. **Manulife Place (1983/1988)** is a two part retail and office complex. The office tower is the tallest building in Edmonton. The retail area has some great stores and eateries.

27. **CityCentre (1990)** is Edmonton's newest downtown office and retail complex. The principal office tenant is the Government of Alberta. A second office tower is planned for the complex. The retailing area is beautiful.

28. **Royal Bank Park** is located on a site owned by the Royal Bank of Canada. Under an agreement with the company, the City may use the property as a public park until the bank decides to proceed with redevelopment plans for the site.

29. **The Canadian Bank of Commerce Building (1929)** occupied by a branch of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, may be incorporated within an expansion of CityCentre. This is the last remaining classically designed banking hall of the seven that once stood on Jasper Avenue. The original interior of the banking hall remains intact.

30. **The Edmonton Journal Building (1991)** was constructed on the site of the old Journal building. Part of the historic facade of the old building is incorporated into the new structure

31. **McDougall United Church (1909)** was the last and largest of three Methodist churches to be built on this property. The original one, built by Rev. George McDougall in 1873, was the first structure of note to be built outside the compound of Fort Edmonton. The 1873 church remained on the property until it was moved to Fort Edmonton Park, where a reconstruction of Fort Edmonton and many other buildings represent periods of Edmonton's history. Fort Edmonton Park is located in the river valley, 7 kilometres from downtown.

32. **The Crowne Plaza Hotel (formerly the Chateau Lacombe - 1967)** was the first of Edmonton's modern hotels to challenge the preeminence of the Macdonald Hotel. A revolving restaurant at the top of the structure provides a magnificent view of the entire city. The hotel was extensively renovated in 1992.

33. **Alberta College** opened in 1903 on its current site. The College has used a number of different buildings on the site, with the most recent being completed in 1993. The new building's neo-classical structure may reflect an earlier period but its facilities are state of the art. The auditorium is as acoustically perfect as current building technology will allow.

34. **McDougall Hill Gallery on the Heritage Trail** is one of a number of stops on the walking path that runs along the pre-1900s route from Fort Edmonton to the centre of town. The Gallery's panels feature historical photographs and narratives about Edmonton's early history. The Gallery overlooks the River Valley communities of Rosedale and Cloverdale and the Capital City Recreation Park system.

35. **The Alberta Telephones Towers (1971)** is the head office of Alberta Government Telephones (AGT). When it was built the larger of the two towers was the tallest building in Edmonton. At the north end of AGT plaza is Teleforum Park, a public open space maintained by AGT. The holographic light canopy was built by artist Michael Hayden.

36. **Imperial Bank Of Commerce Building (1952)** is the regional headquarters of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce. The first bank on this site was built in 1891. It was replaced by a larger structure in 1906 and the current building in 1952.

37. **The Macdonald Hotel (1915)** was, for many years, Edmonton's most elegant hotel. It was built for the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway. The exterior of the hotel is of Indiana limestone and sheet copper roofing. The hotel was closed in 1982 and sold to CP Hotels in 1987. With the assistance of the City of Edmonton, CP restored the building to its original lustre and it was reopened on May 15, 1991.

The Hotel features many historic architectural elements and artifacts including a painting of the Fathers of Confederation at the Quebec Conference of 1884. The original, painted by Robert Harris in 1884, was burned in a fire which destroyed the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa in 1916. Frederick Challenger, a well known mural artist, painted this copy in 1914 to be hung in the hotel when it opened in 1915. The Empire Ball Room and the Wedgewood Room are works of art in themselves.

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